



Lowland Leader Award



Lowland Leader Award

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Lowland Leader Award

Introduction

The Lowland Leader Award is a nationally accredited scheme developed and administered by the five Mountain Training boards across Ireland and the UK. The award is designed to train and assess those who wish to lead groups on day walks in lowland countryside and woodland in summer conditions.

This award complements and supports the other walking awards administered by Mountaineering Ireland – the Walking Group Leader Award (also known as the Hill & Moorland Leader Award in the UK) and the Mountain Leader Award. For further information on these awards and Mountaineering Ireland climbing awards please see www.mountaineering.ie

A further two day Expedition Skills Module is available for those who wish to lead and supervise overnight expeditions. The module also covers remote supervision and teaching navigation. For more information please contact the Mountaineering Ireland Training Office.

Scope of the Lowland Leader Award Scheme (see Appendix 1)

2.1 The Lowland Leader Award trains and assesses candidates in the skills required to lead others on walks in lowland countryside and woodland that fit **ALL** of the following criteria:

- Walks must not cross any hazardous terrain (e.g. cliffs, very steep slopes, water hazards etc.).
- Throughout the walk the group should never be more than 3km away from a key access point such as a car park, lay-by or populated area. Any potential escape routes should also lie within the scope of the defined terrain for the Lowland Leader Award.
- Walks will require the ability to plan routes, use simple navigation skills using a map and compass and be self-sufficient.
- Walks must follow paths or tracks that are both marked on a map and clearly visible on the ground and that do not require navigation across untracked areas.

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- Walks must use bridges or other recognized water crossing points.
- Walks must only take place in summer conditions (i.e. when there is no unavoidable snow or ice on any part of the route).

It is the combination of technical competence and leadership skills supported by a wide range of experience that forms the basis for effective group management. The scheme addresses all these elements. However, the employer or operating authority must ultimately decide whether a leader possesses the personal attributes needed to take responsibility for any particular group of people.

Operating beyond the scope of the scheme.

Mountaineering Ireland award schemes are designed to train and assess the application of technical skills and the judgment of the candidate to lead others in particular terrain and conditions. For information on operating beyond the scope of the scheme, contact the Mountaineering Ireland Training Office.

Stages in the Lowland Leader Award Scheme

- **Register for the award with Mountaineering Ireland:**

You must be 18 to register for this award.

- **Gain relevant experience prior to attending a training course:**

Have personally undertaken and logged an absolute minimum of ten varied walks in Lowland terrain where the use of a map is required.

Or,

Have attended a walking and navigation personal

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skills training course recognised by Mountaineering Ireland or Mountain Training in the UK.

- **Attend a Lowland Leader Award training course:**

Training courses are delivered by Mountaineering Ireland approved Providers and will include a minimum of 16 hours contact time. The training course will focus on the skills and knowledge required by those leading groups and will assume basic competencies in personal skills such as map reading and walking on paths and tracks in Lowland terrain.

Note: Candidates registering for the Lowland Leader Award who have already undertaken training in the Walking Group Leader Award (also known as the Hill and Moorland Leader Award in the UK) or Mountain Leader Award can progress direct to assessment in the Lowland Leader Award if they can demonstrate that their walking experience encompasses walks relevant to the scope of this scheme

- **Undertake a consolidation period**

Candidates are advised to continue to develop skills learned during their training course on suitable lowland terrain walks until they feel confident of their ability to lead groups before they present themselves for assessment. Prior to assessment all candidates must have completed an absolute minimum of 20 logged walks in lowland countryside (10 of these may be those logged prior to training) At least 5 of the 20 must show progressive leadership. Duplicated walks must not be counted in this total and walks should encompass a breadth of different lowland terrains i.e. coast, forest, farm land. Experience gained in other mountain activities is useful, but not a pre-requisite. Some non-Ireland/UK experience may be included, but should be in terrain and conditions that are similar to those in the Ireland/UK and must be unguided. Normally any overseas days would be considered as additional experience and should not form a substantial part of the required total.

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- **Complete an appropriate first aid course.**

Prior to the assessment course the candidate must attend and complete a first aid course of a minimum duration of sixteen hours. First aid courses designed to cater for those working outdoors away from immediate assistance are highly recommended.

- **Attend an assessment course**

Assessment courses will contain a minimum of 16 hours contact time and will be delivered by Mountaineering Ireland approved Providers. Candidates will be tested in accordance with the syllabus and should ensure that they are familiar with it before attending the course.

The assessment result will take one of three forms:

Pass: awarded where the candidate has demonstrated appropriate knowledge and application of the course syllabus and has shown the necessary experience and leadership attributes. The Course Provider will send a 'Pass' page to the candidate.

Defer: awarded where the candidate has generally performed well and has shown the necessary experience and attributes, but where complete proficiency has not been attained in certain aspects of the syllabus or where a lack of experience has been identified.

Fail: awarded where the candidate's performance has been generally weak, or the necessary experience and attributes have not been shown.

In the case of a deferral, candidates are encouraged to return to the original assessment Provider, but can be re-assessed by any assessment Provider.

Practical re-assessments cannot take place within three months of the initial assessment. All deferrals must be completed within five years.

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Candidates may only undertake two short re-assessments after a defer result. Subsequent to that a full assessment must be undertaken.

- **Optional: Expedition Skills Module**

After successful completion of assessment for the Lowland Leader Award a candidate can choose to attend a two day Expedition Skills Module which is delivered as a combined training and assessment course. The module covers leading overnight expeditions, remote supervision and teaching navigation. For more information please contact the Mountaineering Ireland Training Office.

Exemption from training or consolidation period

As noted above, candidates who have attended a training course in the Walking Group Leader Award (also known as the Hill and Moorland Leader Award in the UK) or the Mountain Leader Award may progress straight to an assessment course after registering for the Lowland Leader Award. Other suitably experienced candidates may apply from exemption from the Lowland Leader Award training scheme and, if granted exemption, progress straight to assessment. For further details of the exemption process please contact the Mountaineering Ireland Training Office.

Equal Opportunities

Mountaineering Ireland is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all participants in walking, climbing and mountaineering. Candidates, trainers and assessors will express a positive attitude towards equal opportunities and act as positive role models.

Complaints and appeals procedure

Everyone has the right to complain. All complaints are subject to Mountaineering Ireland's Complaints Policy and Procedures as updated from time to time. This policy can be found on www.mountaineering.ie

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Syllabus

The leader of walking groups needs a wide range of skills and knowledge in order to operate effectively. Not only is it necessary to be able to perform each element in isolation, but it is also vital that leaders can combine several skills at any one time. They may well need to manage the group and navigate simultaneously for example.

Each syllabus section is described in terms of 'learning outcomes', these indicate what the candidate is expected to know, understand or be able to do in order to pass the scheme.

Leadership Skills and Group Management

The leader should be aware of:

- a. Their responsibilities to the group and individuals within it, parents/guardians, employing authorities, other outdoor users and the general public, including the choosing of venues and planning and recording of routes.
- b. Current legislation that relates to the care of groups under their charge, including legislation relating to the care of young people and vulnerable adults.
- c. Specific responsibilities to choose appropriate objectives, to complete detailed preparations and ensure that the group is adequately equipped and briefed for the activity.
- d. Be able to explain the benefits of walking to health and fitness
- e. Communication strategies whilst leading groups.
- f. Group management strategies and the need to adapt to differing groups and situations.
- g. Understand a variety of barriers to participations including mental and physical disability, ethnicity, fitness/health and be aware of the impact of various medical conditions.
- h. Evaluate the progress of those under their charge and motivate them towards further participation where appropriate
- i. Awareness of national walking initiatives and the policies and guidance given about the organization of walking festivals and events.

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Walking Skills

- a. Demonstrate an appropriate level of personal fitness.
- b. Set a sensible pace for the group, understand how to conserve energy and demonstrate balance and co-ordination.
- c. Identify potential hazards and manage risk.

Planning a walk

Adequate planning of a walk is crucial to the enjoyment and safety of the participants and the confidence of the leader. It can vary from a few minutes thought to a pen and paper exercise. When planning a walk, a leader should consider the group's abilities, the terrain to be covered, the weather forecast and plan for any potential emergencies

- a. Understand the scope of the Lowland Leader Award scheme and plan walks that lie within this terrain.
- b. Know where to find information to assist with the planning of walks.
- c. Understand what is required to plan and successfully lead a walk.
- d. Understand common health problems and disabilities and the impact they may have on the walk.
- e. Explain why and when group and personal insurance is necessary.
- f. Weather forecasts – sources, interpretation and assessing impact on planned walks and equipment requirements.
- g. Be able to identify significant risks and appropriate methods to manage risk both in the planning stage and during the journey.
- h. Demonstrate awareness of any policies and guidance for the planning and recording of walks that differing organisations might require.

Basic map work and route finding skills

- a. Candidates should be able to:
- b. Use a variety of commonly used maps and understand the use of scales and symbols.
- c. Understand and use the information given on maps with regard to rights of way and access to land

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- d. Understand how to find uphill and downhill sections using contours and printed heights and identify major land features
- e. Understand and provide six figure grid references.
- f. Find which direction to walk in by orientating the map either in relation to surrounding features or with a compass.
- g. Use the compass to determine the direction of a path or feature
- h. Find out how far apart two points are on the map and calculate how long it will take to walk between them.
- i. Understand 'tick off' and 'catching' features and how to use them to aid route finding.
- j. Recognise linear features such as walls and streams on a map.
- k. Identify position on the map.
- l. Navigate competently (using the above skills) in poor visibility due to weather conditions or darkness.
- m. Understand the benefits and limitations of using handheld GPS devices.

Equipment

Leaders should be familiar with, and able to advise participants on:

- a. Suitable personal clothing and equipment.
- b. Additional equipment carried by the leader.
- c. Appropriate food and liquids to carry.
- d. Use of walking poles.
- e. Appropriate maps and compasses.

Hazards and emergency procedures

Leaders should be familiar with strategies for managing groups when encountering the following hazards:

- a. Badly eroded trails, uneven and wet sections.
- b. A variety of man-made features e.g. stiles, stepped decking, steps etc.
- c. Animals; both livestock and wild.
- d. Roads and traffic.
- e. Other users and their needs e.g. runners, bikers and horses
- f. Working environments e.g. farmyards, quarries, forestry operations.
- g. Water features such as rivers or lakes.
- h. Poor visibility.

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- i. What to do if the path becomes indistinct and /or signs are missing
- j. Weather conditions

The leader should be able to:

- a. Select an appropriate first aid kit and additional group equipment.
- b. Deal with common injuries and medical problems.
- c. Manage self and group in a variety of different weather conditions including heat, cold, rain and high wind.
- d. Take appropriate action in the event of an incident or accident including knowing how to get appropriate assistance.
- e. Plan and follow 'escape routes using appropriate navigational techniques' to nearby assistance.
- f. Manage a group to perform a small scale search for a missing person.

Environmental awareness, conservation, access and land ownership

Access considerations

Leaders should understand and be familiar with the following:

- a. Applicable national codes and policies and other associated codes and their responsibility to minimise impact on the environment.
- b. Current applicable legislation concerning access to the countryside including any laws relating to rights of way and access to land and, the nature of specially designated areas and limitations on their use.
- c. How and where to get information about access to the countryside e.g. from appropriate guidebooks and maps, Mountaineering Council sources, local and National Access Forums and from the various countryside agencies and local authorities. In Ireland, please visit www.countrysidecouncil.ie.

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Environmental awareness

Leaders should seek to develop and extend their:

- Knowledge of countryside flora and fauna.
- Knowledge of local history, place names etc.
- Understanding of how walking can impact on the environment and other people.
- Awareness of conservation programmes such as 'Leave No Trace' and apply those principles in order to minimize the impact of their activities.

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Assessment Checklist

	Done
Maintained this logbook in accordance with the BOS guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completed all personal details on the appropriate page	<input type="checkbox"/>
Become a current member of MI or an affiliated club	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtained a valid first aid certificate and included a copy within	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completed all aspects of LLA Training and provided evidence within	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shown evidence of a minimum of 20 walks* in LLA terrain, a minimum of 5 of which should show progressive leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read and understood all aspects of the BOS LLA syllabus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read and understood all aspect of MI's Environmental Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read and understood all aspects of MI's Good Practice Guide	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read and understood all aspects of MI's Children's policy	<input type="checkbox"/>

* 20 logged walks prior to assessment is an absolute minimum however we would recommend in excess of this number in order to consolidate all elements learnt during training.

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Skills Checklist

	Done
Leadership Skills and Group Management	
Walking Skills	
Planning a Walk	
Basic Map Work and Route Finding	
Equipment	
Hazards and Emergency Procedures	
Environmental awareness, conservation, access and land ownership	

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Sample Log Book Pages

Personal Walking in LLA terrain

<div>+</div> <p>Date: 2/4/13</p> <p>Area: Achill</p> <p>Map sheet no: N/A guide book</p> <p>Status: m</p>	<p>Starting point: <u>Dooagh</u> Car Park Route: Start at Keel and walk along R319 N to graveyard. Turn L and follow gravel road to start End point: <u>Dooagh</u> Car Park Distance travelled: 12.5k Time taken: 4 hours Weather: fine and sunny but a strong W wind</p> <p>Notable events and experiences: The coastal walk reminded me of the hazards of strong winds and steep drops</p>
<p>Date: 1/2/13</p> <p>Area: Dublin <u>Howth</u></p> <p>Map sheet no: N/A</p> <p>Status: S</p>	<p>Starting point: <u>Howth</u> Route: <u>Howth</u> headland End point: <u>Howth</u> Distance travelled: 10km</p> <p>Time taken: 3.5 hours</p> <p>Weather: Dull and wet</p> <p>Notable events and experiences: wore shoes instead of boots and the path proved to be muddy and slippery, could have done with my boots.</p>

Status in group: E=equal, M=member, S=solo

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Sample Log Book Pages

Leading or Assisting Groups in LLA Terrain

<p>Date:</p> <p>Area:</p> <p>Map sheet no:</p> <p>Status: L &A</p>	<p>Type of group, number, age: girl guides, 12, Starting point: Dough Car Park Route: <u>Mizen</u> head End point: Dough Car Park Distance travelled: 6km Time taken: 3 hours</p> <p>Weather: Windy but fine Notable events and experiences: A nice walk that gave the girl guides a glimpse of the <u>Fastnet</u> lighthouse. A simple walk but cows on the road were a problem as some of the group was very scared.</p>
<p>Date: 2/8/12</p> <p>Area:</p> <p>Map sheet no: 29 D edition</p> <p>Status:<u>L</u></p>	<p>Type of group, number, age: A family visiting Ireland, 5 kids and adults Starting point: <u>Trassey</u> Car Park Route: <u>Trassey</u> Track to hare's gap End point: <u>Meelmore</u> Lodge Distance travelled: 6km Time taken: 3 hours</p> <p>Weather: Awful! Wind and rain Notable events and experiences: Walked as far as the <u>Mourne</u> wall. Some of the group's waterproofs were less than adequate and we returned wet but happy to have had a glimpse of the <u>Mourmes</u>. Reminded me to brief people about waterproofs</p>

Status: Leader or Assisting

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Recommended Reading List

Mountain Navigation, Cordee, Cliff P. (2002)

Mountaineering, A&C Black, A. Richardson 2009

Managing Risk in Outdoor Activities, NZ Mountain Safety Council
Haddock C. (1993)

Mountaincraft and Leadership, MLTE/MLTS Langmuir E. (revised 2004)

Hillwalking, MLTUK Long S. (2003)

How to Shit in the Woods, Ten Speed Press Mayer K. (1994)

Managing and Leading Groups in the Outdoors, IFOL Ogilivie K. (2005)

Mountain Weather, Cicerone Pedgley D. (1994)

Weather for Walkers and Climbers, Allan Sutton Publishing Ltd Thomas M. (1995)

Outdoor Navigation – Handbook for Tutors, Pat and Brian Mee on behalf of the National Navigation Award Scheme. Published by Harvey

Useful Websites:

Mountaineering Ireland www.mountaineering.ie

Mountain Leader Training UK www.mountaing-training.org

Leave No Trace Ireland www.leavenotraceireland.org

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Appendix 1:

Scope of the Scheme:

This defines the area in which trail walking takes place and hence the training syllabus. No single statement should be used to justify the selection of a route.

The walks are on **Trails** that are well defined **manmade** walking routes that **may or may not have directional** markings.

The walks are in terrain with **minimal hazards** and **low risk** and the leader is likely to be no further than one or two hours walk from assistance.

The trails may be in **forests, coast and open-countryside**

The walks are undertaken during **summer conditions**.

The trail may also be **all or part of 'waymarked ways' or 'looped' walks** but not when they enter out of scope terrain

The walks will require **leadership skills** and the ability to plan, carry out simple tasks using **a map and compass** and to be **self-sufficient** for extended periods of the day.

Outside the Scope of the Scheme:

The training for the Lowland Leader Award scheme does **NOT** cover the techniques and skills required to safely lead others on:

Paths with or without directional signs that enter terrain where there is the possibility that the leader will be required to use complex navigation techniques, such as the ability to walk on a compass bearing and to be able to recognize complex land relief and contours. The appropriate training for this terrain is the WGL.

Where the trail enters terrain that may require, in addition to the above, the ability to cope with steep ground the ML is the appropriate award